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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Agenda item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Mandated areas

Information received from non-governmental organizations

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network

* E/C.19/2004/1.

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1. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues already conducted two successful sessions without a secretariat. The establishment of a separate secretariat is a giant step. In order to ensure that the Forum and its Secretariat can fulfill the aspirations of the indigenous peoples from all over the world, the Forum could consider the following areas of work in future.

A. Development of Guidelines for Integration of Indigenous Issues

2. One of the mandates of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is to "promote the integration and coordination of activities relating to indigenous issues within the United Nations system." The question is how could the Permanent Forum fulfill its mandate of coordination with large United Nations agencies with a small Secretariat. The presentation of the annual sessional report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council will soon become a ritual and is not the ideal way of promoting integration and coordination of activities on indigenous issues.

3. Integration of women rights' issues in the UN system provides excellent lessons for the Forum. The Secretary General regularly reports to the Commission on Human Rights and other relevant bodies about the Integration of Women Rights' Issues in the United Nations system. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in its paragraph 209 called upon to multilateral institutions to develop such principles for indigenous peoples.

4. One of the important future tasks of the Permanent Forum could be to elaborate upon the paragraph 209 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and draft *Principles on Integration of Indigenous Peoples Issues in the United Nations system* for consideration by the ECOSOC and the Secretary General of the United Nations. The Secretary General subsequently should adopt these principles binding to all UN agencies, funds and programmes to ensure that indigenous peoples' priorities are properly reflected in the Country Strategy Note and Common Country Assessment and assistance under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

5. If the Forum is to have any meaning for over 300 million indigenous peoples, the rhetorical discussions at the Forum, at the headquarters of the United Nations agencies and the Inter-Agency Support Group on PFII must be transformed into principles to be implemented at national level by the UN agencies. Unless the Secretary General adopts such principles, it would be difficult for the Forum, its secretariat to ensure that UN agencies at the national level give adequate priorities to indigenous issues. It will be unfortunate if promotion of coordination and integration were to be reduced to the submission of Forum's annual report to the ECOSCO without proper record of the debates.

B. A United Nations Fund for Indigenous Peoples

6. The establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is one of the key objectives of the International Decade on World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004). As the United Nations evaluates the International Decade, the Permanent Forum needs to play a crucial role to promote and protect indigenous peoples rights beyond the decade.

7. Across the world, indigenous peoples are lowest in the economic ladder of the society. The root cause of majority of the conflicts with indigenous peoples is political but economic neglect and deprivation perpetuates and accentuates these conflicts.

8. A United Nations Fund for Indigenous Peoples is the best way to reach out to the majority of indigenous peoples all over the world to promote the economic, social and cultural development of all indigenous peoples. The Voluntary Fund for International Decade has failed to reach out to indigenous peoples due to lack of resources.

9. The United Nations had earlier established UN Voluntary Fund for Women. It was later turned into United Nations Funds of Women (UNIFEM). The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues should play an effective role in contributing towards the establishment of the United Nations Fund for Indigenous Peoples.

C. Establishing linkages with the National Human Rights Commission

10. One of the recommendations of the Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions is to take steps "to ensure that the composition of the membership of National Human Rights Institutions reflects the diversity of the country and population, and to ensure that members of groups which are victims of or vulnerable to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance have adequate access to these institutions".

11. The Aboriginal Torres Straight Islander Commission is a part of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. Although, a large number of countries across the world (see ww.nhri.net) have established National Human Rights Institutions, they have not fully complied with the Paris Principles of National Human Rights Institutions.

12. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues should create mechanisms to raise awareness on indigenous issues with these National Human Rights Institutions for promotion and protection of indigenous peoples rights at national level.